



Stories from the Ballads, Told to the Children - MacGregor

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Mary Esther Miller MacGregor

Listen, children, for you will wish to hear where I found the tales which I have told you in this little book. It is long, oh! so long ago, that they were sung up hill and down dale by wandering singers who soon became known all over the country as minstrels, or ofttimes, because they would carry with them a harp, as harpers. In court, in cottage, by princes and by humble folk, everywhere, by every one the minstrels were greeted with delight. To such sweet music did they sing the songs or ballads which they made or perchance had heard, to such sweet music, that those who listened could forget nor tale nor tune. In those far-off days of minstrelsy the country was alive with fairies. Over the mountains, through the glens, by babbling streams and across silent moors, the patter of tiny feet might be heard, feet which had strayed from Elfinland. It was of these little folk and of their visits to the homes of mortals that the minstrels sang. Stern songs too were theirs, songs of war and bloodshed, when clan fought with clan and lives were lost and brave deeds were done. Of all indeed that made life glad or sad, of these the minstrels sang. From town to village, from court to inn they wandered, singing the old songs, adding verses to them here, dropping lines from them there, singing betimes a strain unheard before, until at length the day came when the songs were written down. It was in the old books that thus came to be written that I first found these tales, and when you have read them perhaps you will wish to go yourself to the same old books, to find many another song of love and hate, of joy and sorrow. - Summary by Mary Macgregor

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